

PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 16th, 2025 MEETING

5:30 p.m. Public Session – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

Kate Coyle, Chair
Buzz Scherr, Commissioner
Francesca Fernald, Commissioner

The following people were present at the public session: Commissioners Coyle (Chair), Scherr and Fernald, Chief Mark Newport, Deputy Chief Mike Maloney, Business Manager Karen Senecal, Executive Assistant Jackie Burnett and members of the public.

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chair Coyle.

II. **MOTION TO SUSPEND THE AGENDA:**

Motion: Commissioner Scherr moved to suspend the agenda to move to #1 & #2 under the Chief's Report: (1) *FY27 Budget Process Presentation*, (2) *K9 Unit Presentation*.

Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.

Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

Chief's Report:

#1, FY27 Budget Process Presentation

City Manager Karen Conard and Deputy City Manager for Administration and Finance Nathan Lunney outlined expectations for the FY27 budget process, emphasizing an earlier start would allow more time to address potential challenges. They reviewed the stable economic outlook, anticipated slight revenue growth, and key components of the budget timeline, including the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), rolling stock, staffing, employee benefits and City Council guidance.

Departments are expected to submit a Continuing Services Budget (CSB), identify potential reductions if the CSB exceeds economic indicators, and justify any new staffing or service expansions. Final guidance will be shaped by the incoming City Council.

Commissioner Scherr noted FY26 budget guidance shifted from a 4% to a 2.7% increase. Deputy City Manager Lunney explained that in the absence of timely Council input, usually not until February, the City relies on economic indicators, which can require last-minute adjustments. In response to a question from Commissioner Fernald, City Manager Conard clarified that some departments have greater fixed costs, and budget balancing led to reduced allocations for others, including the police department.

#2, K-9 Unit Presentation

Master Patrolman Bill Werner provided an update on the Police Department's K-9 Unit. He highlighted the unit's long-standing history as one of the oldest in the state and reviewed the comprehensive training program completed by each K-9 team. The presentation recognized the dedication of both the canine officers and their handlers.

III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by the Commission.

IV. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE 7/15/25 & 8/19/25 MEETING MINUTES:**

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to accept the minutes of the above-noted Police Commission meeting.

Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.

Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

David Holt (Somersworth, NH) Mr. Hold raised concerns regarding an on-duty officer's conduct during a protest, claiming his rights were infringed upon and that the officer placed personal ideology above professional responsibility. He cited a perceived abuse of power and encouraged further officer education.

Tom Rossi (Portsmouth, NH) Mr. Rossi commended the Police Department for its professionalism and for assisting during emergency situations involving his elderly parent. He praised officers for demonstrating restraint in high-stress, contentious interactions with the public.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. POLICE COMMISSION:

1. Facilities Update

a. Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee

Commissioner Scherr reported ongoing discussions regarding the facilities needs assessment and related cost estimates. Several

options are being considered, with formal cost projections expected in early 2026. A standalone police facility is no longer being discussed.

b. Dispatch Center Mold Remediation

Chief Newport informed the Commission that mold remediation work at the Dispatch Center is scheduled to begin in January. While cost estimates are not yet available, preparations are underway to utilize the redundant dispatch center at Fire Station 2 during the process.

2. Community Priorities

Deputy Chief Maloney provided an update on the rollout of Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs), noting that they have been successfully deployed. Officers are operating the cameras in accordance with a comprehensive department policy that governs their use. Commissioner Scherr acknowledged the substantial work invested in the implementation of BWCs. The department is also implementing a new Computer-Aided Dispatch/Records Management system (CAD/RMS), scheduled to go live on Monday, November 4. This transition is expected to enhance daily operations significantly. The department is currently exploring the addition of a second Social Worker to better serve the needs of the community.

3. Community Dialogue on ICE (August 19th Meeting)

Commissioner Fernald noted that minutes and an audio recording of the August 19 meeting are available on the City of Portsmouth's YouTube channel. The meeting was described as constructive, with meaningful dialogue and active listening. Following the meeting, the Police Commission submitted an editorial to the Portsmouth Herald to highlight key points from the discussion.

B. CHIEF OF POLICE:

1. – 2. Budget Presentation and K-9 Presentation (See Section II)

3. 3 Donations

- a. \$500.00 from FedPoint for the Portsmouth Police K-9 Unit.
Action: Commissioner Fernald moved to accept the donation.
Seconded: Commissioner Scherr.
Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).
- b. \$189.00 from Walmart, raised through a Texas Roadhouse fundraiser, for the Portsmouth Police Explorers Program.
Action: Commissioner Fernald moved to accept the donation.
Seconded: Commissioner Scherr.
Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

- c. \$100.00 from Vanessa Smiley of Exeter, NH, raised through a Texas Roadhouse Fundraiser, also for the Portsmouth Police Explorers Program.

Action: Commissioner Fernald moved to accept the donation.

Seconded: Commissioner Scherr.

Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

4. Crime Analyst Report (January 1 – August 31, 2025)

(Compared to previous 3-year average)

Calls for Service: ↓ 5.8%

Arrests: ↑ 0.6%

DWI Arrests: ↑ 3.2%

Reports Taken: ↓ 12.4%

Reportable Motor Vehicle Crashes: ↓ 7.9%

Motor Vehicle Stops: ↓ 11.6%

IEA (Involuntary Emergency Admissions): ↓ 9%

Juvenile Matter Calls: ↓ 27.9%

Commissioner Scherr inquired about the significant drop in juvenile-related calls. Deputy Chief Maloney attributed this to staffing levels, noting that minimum staffing has impacted call response and documentation. Despite this, youth-related incidents remain a priority. The Crime Analyst continues to monitor data trends. The Chief added that community policing efforts may also be contributing to reduced incident reports.

Deputy Chief Maloney announced an upcoming public session on e-bike safety to be held on September 24 at 4:00 PM at the public library. Commissioner Scherr added that this topic is under review at the state legislative level as well.

5. Monthly Traffic Stats (July 2025):

- Motor vehicle stops: 763
- Summonses issued: 23
- Reportable motor vehicle crashes: 54

Monthly Traffic Stats (August 2025):

- Motor vehicle stops: 522
- Summonses issued: 23
- Reportable motor vehicle crashes: 41

6. Financial Report

The FY25 budget closed with 97.76% of funds expended. During the FY26 budget hearing, it was noted that salary savings from unfilled

positions do not equate to direct financial returns, as backfilling those positions incurs additional costs. The department realized \$286,000 in salary savings but faced significant replacement costs. FY26 is currently tracking at 14.5% expenditure, slightly below projections (approximately 1%).

a. Grant Applications Update

The department is awaiting the next cycle of federal ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children) grant applications.

b. Strategic Plan Presentation

Business Ops. Manager Karen Senecal will present the Strategic Plan at the next meeting.

VII. PATROL DIVISION:

- a.** This report was included in the commission meeting packet.

VIII. COURT OFFICE REPORT:

- a.** This confidential report was included in the meeting packet.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER BUSINESS:

X. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

Tuesday, October 21st, 2025, at 5:30 PM. May be rescheduled.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Motion: Commissioner Scherr moved to adjourn at 6:44 p.m.

Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.

Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully Submitted by Jacqueline Burnett, Executive Assistant
Commissioner Buzz Scherr, Recording Clerk of the Commission